


Venture Capital Office Headquarters

Architect: Paul Murdoch Architects; Kappe Architects Planners

Location: Menlo Park, California


Jury Comments

What a great building! It turns the corner from what could have been a typically corporate and monotonous office space into a surprisingly refreshing environment with drama.

The strategic use of color and materiality is elegant and well crafted.

It pulls you back a generation in a fresh way. It is extremely sustainable, and the prefabrication is well done.

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This project, for a clean-technology venture capital firm in Menlo Park, is located on some of the most expensive commercial real estate in North America, so optimizing use of the property was critical. The 12,500-square-foot office building is constructed of prefabricated steel modules stacked in two stories and mounted on a concrete podium that houses below-grade parking.

Gardens, transparency, and wood finishes create a warm, inviting work environment. The building is essentially a glass pavilion in a garden on a tight infill site. Strong accent colors express the company's reputation for bold risk-taking. Finishes are of fine, straight-grained, wire-brushed wood. Occupants enjoy landscaped views, natural lighting, and ventilation through high-performance floor-to-ceiling glass. Transparent walls inside mitigate the building's high density by allowing garden views and natural light throughout the interior.

Planted screening and vegetated roofs create a garden setting that can be enjoyed from the interior and provide privacy from adjacent properties. The podium garden above the parking garage features seating, planted screens, and a trellis structure. Plantings on the second floor and the roof use a system of vegetated roof trays with light engineered soil, thereby mitigating the loading on the building. The generous provision of green spaces played a major role in convincing the neighbors to approve the project. In addition, the plantings and shade structures help reduce the building's heat load.

The building is designed to temporarily house young companies. Because these start-ups can evolve (or fail) quickly, the interiors are adaptable to changing needs. Warm-toned concrete floors reinforce open, spatial continuity and allow demountable walls and glass partitions to be added or removed.

The use of prefabricated components was adopted to minimize on-site construction staging, meet the schedule, and take advantage of material efficiencies in factory-made components. The project is LEED® Silver certified.

Additional Credit

Contractor: Louis Ptak Construction, Inc.
Engineer – Civil: BKF Engineers
Engineer – Electrical: Morrow-Meadows Corp.
Engineer – Mechanical & Plumbing: ACCO Engineered Systems
Engineer – Structural: Simpson Gumpertz & Heger
Landscape Architect: HMM Landscape Architecture
Lighting Designer: Sean O'Connor Lighting, Inc.
Prefabrication Consultant: LivingHomes

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